

***“The Meaning And Seriousness Of Baptism”*** Delivered by E A Terry 01 29 19  
Genesis 17: 9 – 14; Exodus 4:21 – 26; Matthew 28:16 – 20; **Matthew 3: 13 – 17; (Sermon)**

The word “*baptism*” means identification with.

A person is baptized to show that they want to be identified with Jesus Christ.

In our lesson from Exodus we read that when God established a spiritual covenant with Abraham, God said that the sign of that covenant was circumcision.

Baptism is a sign and our pledge that we identify with God and that we are in covenant with God.

Baptism is the sign of our oneness with Jesus Christ.

Baptism is our public affirmation that we are God’s people and we are Jesus’ disciples.

Baptism is an outward, visible, physical sign that points to the real thing which is an inward, invisible, and a spiritual change that takes place in a person.

Water is used in baptism as a sign of Jesus washing away our sins and declaring us to be righteous.

However, we need to be clear that being baptized is **not** the same as being saved.

You are **not** baptized to be saved; you are baptized because you are saved.

The Bible is quite clear a person is saved by believing that Jesus is God and asking Jesus to be your savior.

Listen to Romans 10: 9 & 10. “... ***if you confess with your mouth that “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.***” (Romans 10: 9 – 10)

You are baptized because you want to be identified with Jesus Christ.

Remember baptism is an outward, visible, physical sign that points to the real thing which is inward, invisible, and spiritual.

Remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus. “***You must be born again.***” (John 3:5)

Since Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin Nicodemus had to have been circumcised as a child.

But Jesus made it clear that just because Nicodemus had the physical sign of the covenant it did not assure Nicodemus’ salvation.

God knew that Esau and Ishmael were not one of the elect but God said to put the sign of the covenant on them.

Baptism, whether infant or adult, is no guarantee of salvation.

The question always comes up why do we baptize infants and children in the Presbyterian Church?

In our Old Testament lesson from Genesis we read that when God established a spiritual covenant with Abraham God said that circumcision was the sign of the covenant.

And God also told Abraham to mark his children with this physical sign of the covenant. (Genesis 17:12)

Baptism is the New Testament equivalent of circumcision, just as The Sacrament of The Lord's Supper is The New Testament equivalent of The Passover.

Therefore, the children of New Testament Christians should be baptized.

We can read about the children of believers being baptized in the early church.

In Acts 16: 24b – 15a we read; ***“The Lord opened her (Lydia’s) heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she (Lydia) and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home”.***

Acts 16:33 states; ***“At that hour of the night the jailer took them (Paul and Silas) and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized.”***

And 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:16 states; ***“Yes, I (Paul) also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.***

In each of these passages we see that the children were heirs of the covenant and were included in the family of God by the profession of faith of their parents.

When a child is baptized the parents profess their faith in Jesus Christ and the parents claim God’s covenant promises on behalf of their child.

Baptism identifies the child with Jesus Christ and marks the child’s beginning of a new life with Jesus Christ.

When a child is baptized the parents claim God’s protection and God’s blessing on their child until such time as the child reaches the age of accountability.

The parents promise to teach their child about Jesus and to pray with their child and to pray for their child.

The church promises to help the parents teach the child to know and to love The Lord.

Children receive the promises of Jesus Christ at their baptism but they must take possession of them when they reach an age of accountability; much like The Children of Israel were promised the land of Canaan, but they had to take possession of it.

Similarly Christians have been promised all spiritual gifts but like any gift we must take possession of God's gifts for the gifts to be of any benefit to us.

A sincere profession of faith validates God's promises.

When a child is baptized in the Presbyterian Church we say baptism is a sign.

At confirmation that sign becomes a seal of the child's relationship with Jesus Christ.

When an adult is baptized in the Presbyterian Church we say that baptism is a seal of their relationship with Christ.

In Genesis 17:14 we see that God is very serious about children receiving the sign of our covenant with God.

***“Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”***

Then in Exodus 3 and 4 right after God called Moses to lead The Children out of slavery in Egypt into The Promised land Exodus 4: 24 tells us; ***“The Lord was about to kill Moses”*** because Moses had not circumcised his son.

God is very serious about us obeying His command for every member of a believer's household to receive the sign of His covenant.

In Matthew 28: 18 – 20 we read Jesus' command.

***“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”***

In our lesson from Matthew 3 we read about Jesus being baptized.

Almost every time this passage is read someone asks, *“Why was Jesus baptized?”*

John The Baptist called people to repent and to be baptized.

But The Bible is clear Jesus was not sinful; Jesus was holy.

So Jesus did not need to repent.

There are 3 basic reasons for Jesus' baptism. When Jesus was baptized by John, Jesus completely identified Himself with sinful mankind.

Secondly in baptism Jesus voluntarily took on all of the sins of the world upon Himself.

In 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21 we are told, ***“God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.”***

There was no sin in Jesus, but my sins and your sins were put on Jesus.

Jesus’ death on the cross paid the penalty for of our sins.

When Jesus rose from the dead Jesus defeated death and provided a way for believers to experience eternal life.

The third reason Jesus was baptized was God revealed who Jesus was to John The Baptist and to us.

***“As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”*** (Matthew 3:16-17)

Here we see The Holy Trinity; God The Son coming out of the water; God The Father speaking from heaven; and God The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove coming down from heaven and lighting on Jesus’ head.

Jesus’ baptism also showed Jesus’ obedience to God The Father.

Jesus said ***“I came to do my Father’s will”*** (John 6:38)

In our baptism we show our obedience to our Heavenly Father by acknowledging God’s claim on our life and / or on the lives of the children we present to Him at baptism.

Baptism identifies us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection.

Baptism signifies our covenant and spiritual union with Christ.

Baptism represents all of the blessings that flow from our union with Christ.

Baptism is a sign and pledge of us being in covenant with Almighty God.

Baptism is a public affirmation that we are God’s people and that we are Jesus’ disciples.

In our Baptism **we** acknowledge God’s claim on our lives **or** on the children we present to Him at Baptism.

If you want to go to heaven when you die and you have never been asked Jesus to be your savior, and to save you from the penalty of your sins, you need to do that today.

If you have never been baptized you also need to do that as soon as possible.

If any of your children have not been baptized I beg you to talk to me after the service and schedule a time for your children to be baptized.

I can not imagine a parent not wanting to claim all of God's wonderful promises for their child.

If you want God's best for your children you will have your children baptized as soon as possible.

Friends, there is no Biblical basis for a tradition of waiting for a child to be one year old before they are baptized.

Remember Genesis 17: 12 tells us; ***“every male eight days old must be circumcised.”***

As we of celebrating the Sacrament of Baptism this morning, I challenge all of us to remember:

- That baptism means identification with Jesus Christ;
- That baptism is a sign that we are in covenant with God;
- What you promised when you were baptized;
- The promises you made when you had your children baptized;
- The promises you as a member of the church family made to the person being baptized.

God is very serious about us obeying His command for every member of a believer's household to receive the sign of His covenant.

**AMEN**